

AOTEAROA'S ATTITUDES ON SAVING OUR ENDANGERED SPECIES

Spotlight on conserving Māui and Hector's dolphins



WORKING
TOGETHER
TO SAVE MĀUI
DOLPHINS



Endangered
Species
Foundation



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A Kantar Public Company

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A research report for:



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1.0 Summary of findings

New Zealand’s concerns for their native species sit on three core foundations:

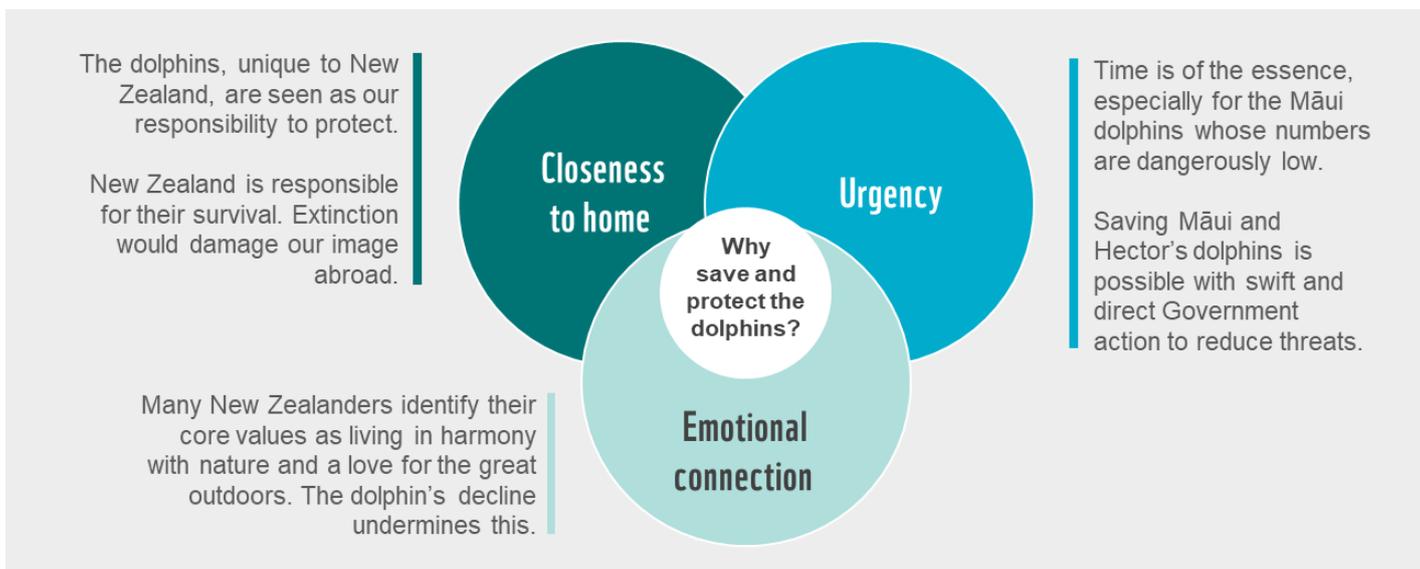
- **Closeness to home:** They are our native species, unique to New Zealand, and their proximity to many has created a sense of familiarity and affinity for them.
- **Emotional connection:** Most people view our native wildlife as shy, peaceful, and harmless creatures. They are integral to our connection to nature and the outdoors, which New Zealander’s describe as a core part of their identity.
- **Urgency:** The finality of extinction has raised peoples’ fears that time is running out for many of our native species. (e.g. kauri, Māui dolphins).

For Maori, as tangata whenua, losing native species would mean losing a core part of their identity. Native species occupy an integral place in mātauranga, te reo, and tikanga Māori.



“Part of our tikanga is teaching our young ones about how to live alongside [native species] but if we lose all of our kauri, for example, we won’t be able to do that. And we will have lost part of what it means to be Māori forever.”
Māori, Female, 51-60 years old

Focus on the three core concerns for Māui and Hector’s dolphins:



The impact of losing Māui and Hector’s dolphins is likely to be severe on the public’s conscience and some think it would constitute a national disaster. For many, protecting the dolphins is primarily a government issue because the threats require immediate action. Many believe waiting for community-led action may be too little, too late, to prevent further population decline.

In fact, the quantitative findings show the majority of New Zealanders want the government to act immediately to save the Māui dolphins. Eighty-one percent think the government should act now to reduce threats, before there is any further decline in numbers.

2.0 Background

The Māui and Hector's dolphins are the world's smallest marine dolphin and endemic to New Zealand's coastal waters. Māui dolphins, a North Island sub-species of Hector's, live on the West Coast. Hector's dolphins live in genetically distinct populations all around the South Island.

Māui dolphins are the rarest marine dolphin in the world with only about 60 individuals left over the age of one. Over the last 30 years, scientists estimate Māui dolphins may have declined by up to 80%. Hector's dolphin populations have also been significantly affected. While the overall population of Hector's dolphins is around 15,000, that number does not present the full picture of risk facing the species. Some local Hector's dolphin populations are small and at risk of extinction.

Prior research conducted by The World Wild Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Endangered Species Foundation (ESF) shows New Zealanders want Māui and Hector's dolphins to be saved from extinction. However, the reasons why New Zealanders believe conservation action is important, has not previously been explored.

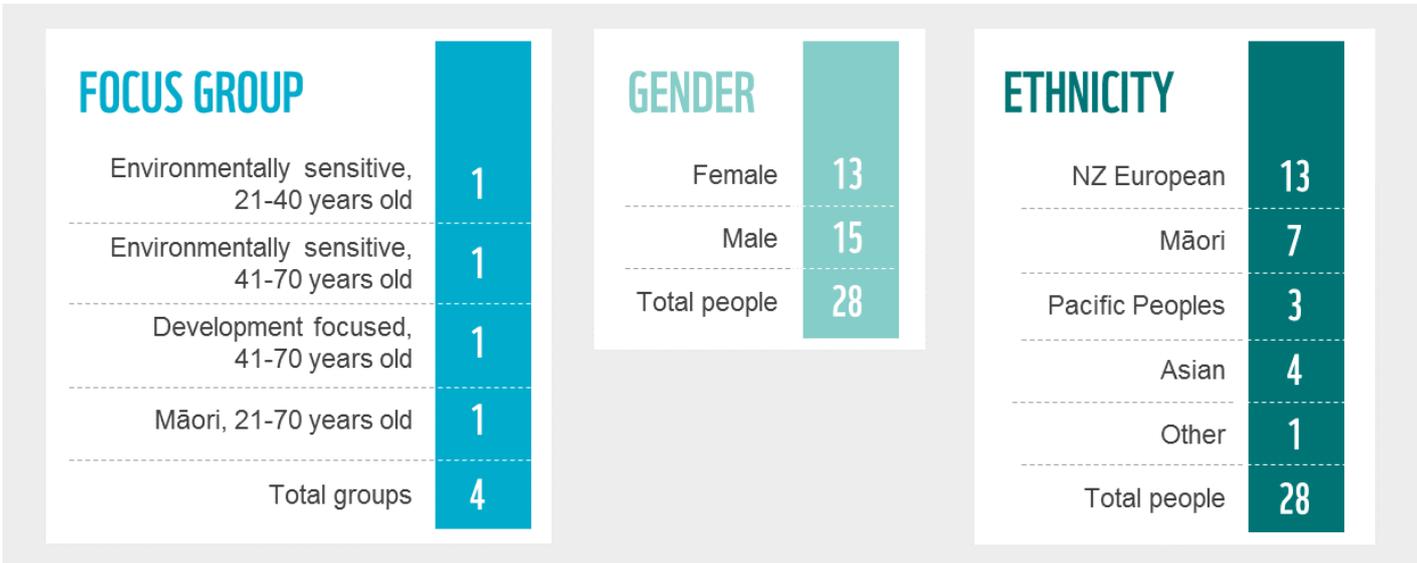
This research aimed to understand:



2.1 Our qualitative approach

We undertook four focus groups with a range of New Zealanders (28 people in total). The focus groups were conducted between **28 January and 8 February 2019**¹. Each focus group lasted up to two hours.

¹ After the qualitative fieldwork was concluded, two events directly related to the Māui and Hector's dolphins took place: Five Hector's dolphins were caught in commercial nets in the South Island ([Link](#))
New Zealand's freediving champion William Trubridge swam the Cook Strait to raise awareness for the endangered dolphins ([Link](#))



2.2 Our quantitative approach

Three questions were placed on Colmar Brunton’s online omnibus. All respondents were New Zealanders aged 18 and over and sourced from Colmar Brunton’s online panel.

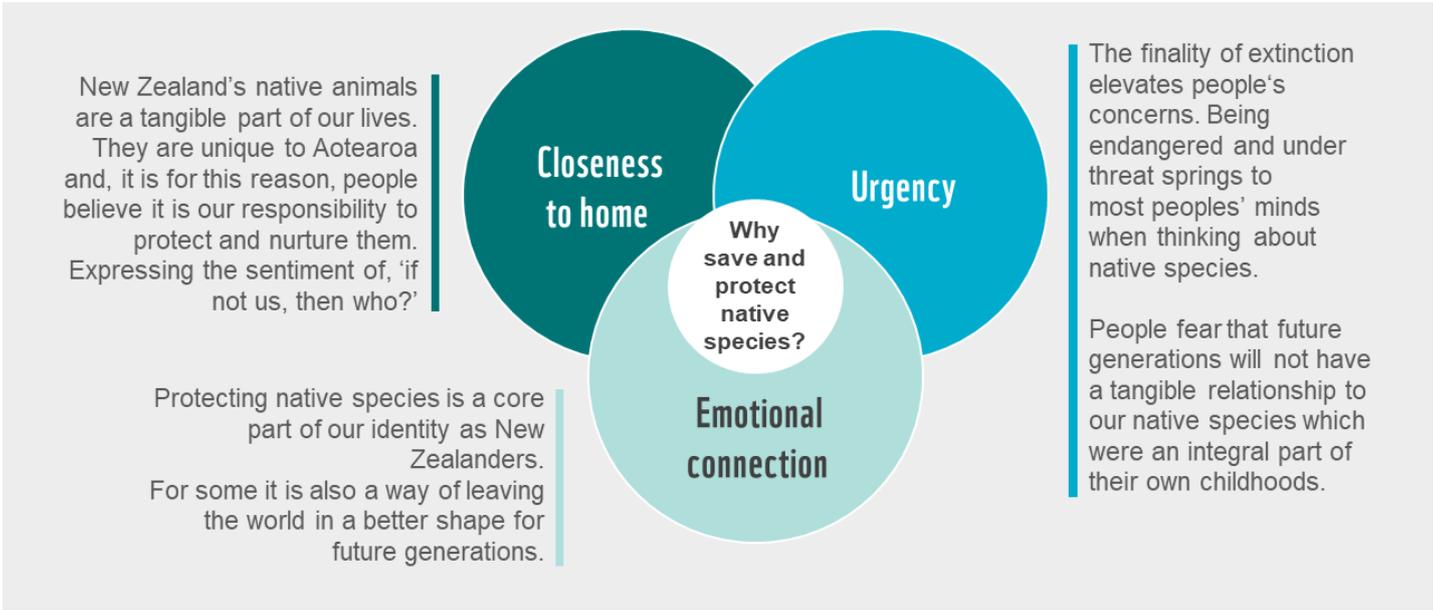
In total, 1,000 New Zealanders took part in the research conducted between **27 February and 6 March 2019**.

The sample was selected to be representative of people in New Zealand aged 18+ based on age, gender, and region. Furthermore, the data was post-weighted, so the final sample is representative of New Zealanders 18+ by age, gender, and region.

Please note the percentages may not add to 100% or the net scores due to rounding.

3.0 Understanding why native species are important to New Zealanders

Native species matter to New Zealanders because:



““

I have memories of growing up and looking for pāua and kina with my family...we would make a day out of it. So they're something really close to my heart...but now people are [over-fishing] them and they're getting smaller and smaller. It worries me that we won't have any left soon enough.

Māori, Male, 41-50 years old

““

“Once an animal is extinct, it's gone. Never to come back. And too many of our species are close to that point.”

NZ European, Female, 30-40 years old

““

“Our [native] species are part of New Zealand as much as we are...and so many of them are harmless and peaceful that you do feel a bit protective towards them.”

NZ European, Female, 51-60 years old

For Māori, as tangata whenua, native species are integral to Te Ao Māori which magnifies their concerns.

“

“[Māori] should be doing all we can to safeguard our native species. We need to lead the way.”

Māori, Male, 41-50 years old

“

“[Our native species] are part of our tūrangawaewae; we start here and finish here. And our native species are what makes us who we are...they give us mana.”

Māori, Male, 31-40 years old

4.0 The reasons behind the concerns for Māui and Hector’s dolphins

In general, people know very little about Māui and Hector’s dolphins. However, despite this knowledge gap, people recognise the dolphins are under threat from over-fishing, unsafe fishing practices, and water pollution. When they think of our dolphins, the language they used was *dying or fading away, in trouble, and threatened*.

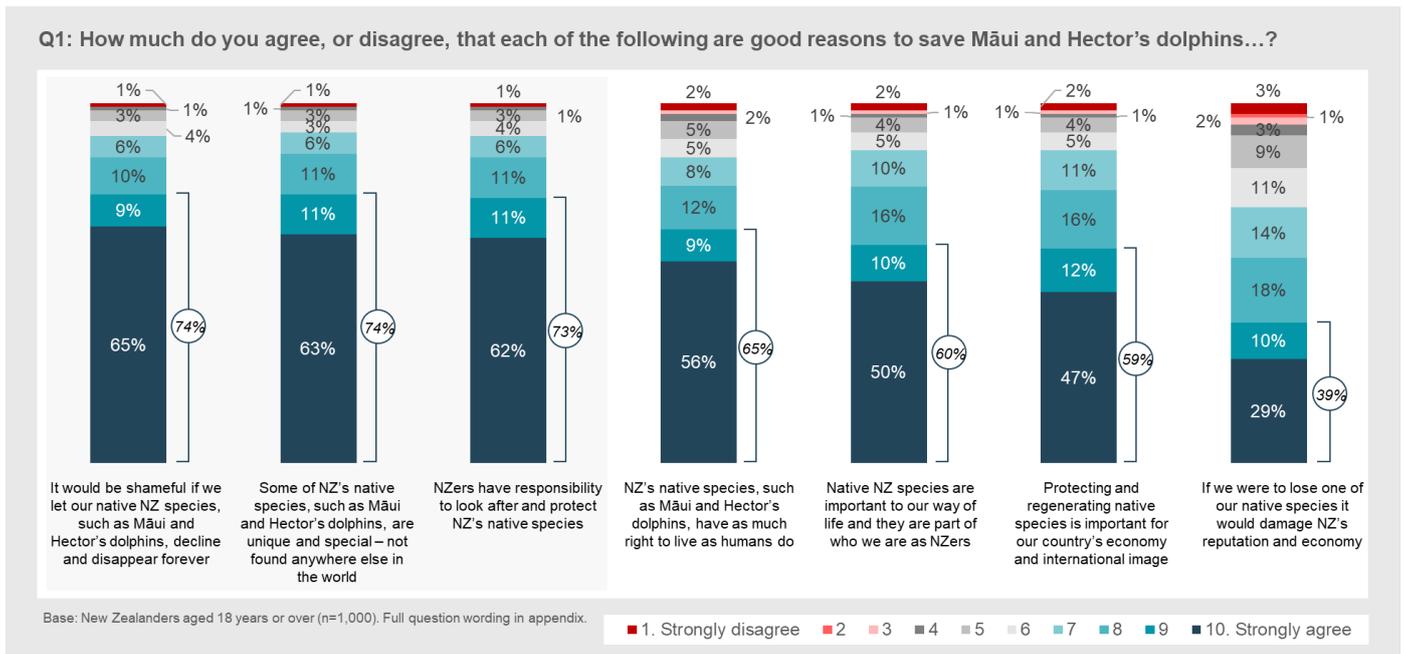
“

“I don’t know much [about the dolphins] but I do know they are dying out. It’s the first thing that comes to mind when I think about them.”

Asian (Chinese), Female, 31-40 years old

The emotions and the reasons behind their concerns are also reflected by our quantitative findings. New Zealanders were asked to rank seven statements about whether they felt these statements were good reasons to save Māui and Hector’s dolphins.

Nearly three-quarters of New Zealanders strongly agree the main reasons to save Māui and Hector's dolphins are urgency, uniqueness, and personal responsibility (their agreement is rated 9-10 out of 10). Almost no one, only 1%- 2%, disagreed with these reasons (with their ratings falling between 1-3 out of 10).



The qualitative findings show many New Zealanders see themselves as being close to nature. The decline of the dolphin population directly undermines this view. Especially, as dolphins are seen as harmless and unique. Their demise runs counter to our beliefs of having a love of the great outdoors.

In addition, many people feel it is our responsibility to protect Māui and Hector's dolphins. Plus, losing them would have major negative implications for our country's image and undermine our ability to take a stand or the lead on global issues such as climate change, whaling, deep sea drilling, and more.

“The dolphins are our responsibility. Not someone else's. If they were to die, the blame would be at our doorstep.”
New Zealand European, Female, 61-70 years old

“We're not really clean or green if we let these creatures go extinct? That image is such a draw for tourists but no one is going to want to visit if they see how polluted our water is and the way we are killing off our wildlife.”
Asian (Indian), Male, 31-40 years old

Overall, when prompted, New Zealanders care strongly about the protection of Māui and Hector’s dolphins. While their plight is not at the forefront of most people’s minds, it is believed the backlash from extinction would be disproportionately severe. They expressed fear time is running out for these native species.



“Ultimately it’s the government...it needs to set the direction in which we want to go; it’s their responsibility to provide funding for the fishing industry [to help them change their practices] and monitor what they’re doing.”

Asian (Indian), Male, 31-40 years old

People are disappointed the conservation and protection of our rare dolphins does not appear to be a current priority of this Government. For many, the importance of conserving these native species makes the issue unrivalled in terms of importance compared to other conservation challenges. Particularly, as a chance remains to save Māui and Hector’s dolphins despite low population numbers.



“I would’ve thought we were already doing something to urgently protect the dolphins.” **New Zealand European, Female, 31-40 years old**

5.0 Where does responsibility lie for saving Māui and Hector’s dolphins?

People feel limited in their ability to help remove the threats faced by the Māui and Hector’s dolphins because they are viewed as victims of primarily structural problems.

Primary responsibility is seen to rest with the government both because of its upstream position in relation to the threats faced by the dolphins and because action needs to be taken quickly and at scale.



“Ultimately it’s the government...it needs to set the direction in which we want to go; it’s their responsibility to provide funding for the fishing industry [to help them their change practices] and monitor what they’re doing.”

Asian (Indian), Male, 31-40 years old

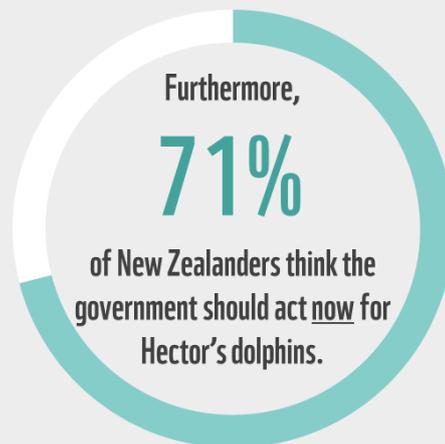
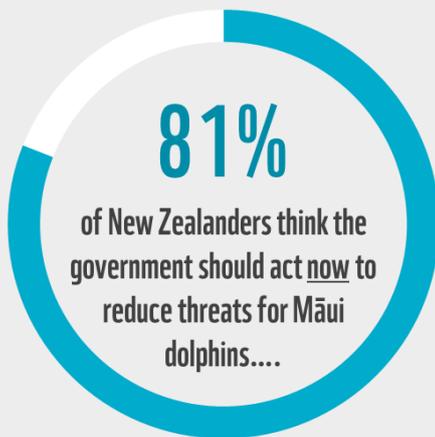


6.0 When, if at all, should the Government act?

The government has lots of competing priorities and protecting native species is just one of them. Understanding when conservation action should be taken, and when threats should be reduced can be difficult for decision-makers. Clear policy to guide decisions is needed and should be informed by societal values about what is right.

In the quantitative survey we asked New Zealanders if, and at what point, the government should act to reduce threats facing Māui and Hector dolphins. Most New Zealanders think the government should act now to reduce threats before there is any further population decline: 81% believe the government should act now for Māui dolphins, and 71% think the government should act now for Hector dolphins. Only a very small proportion of New Zealanders, 2%, don't think the government should act at any point in their decline.

Q2: The government is considering how much human impact is “too much”, and at what point they should act to reduce threats facing Māui and Hector’s dolphins, if at all. At what percentage decline in numbers, if at all, do you think the government should act to reduce the threats facing Māui and Hector’s dolphins?

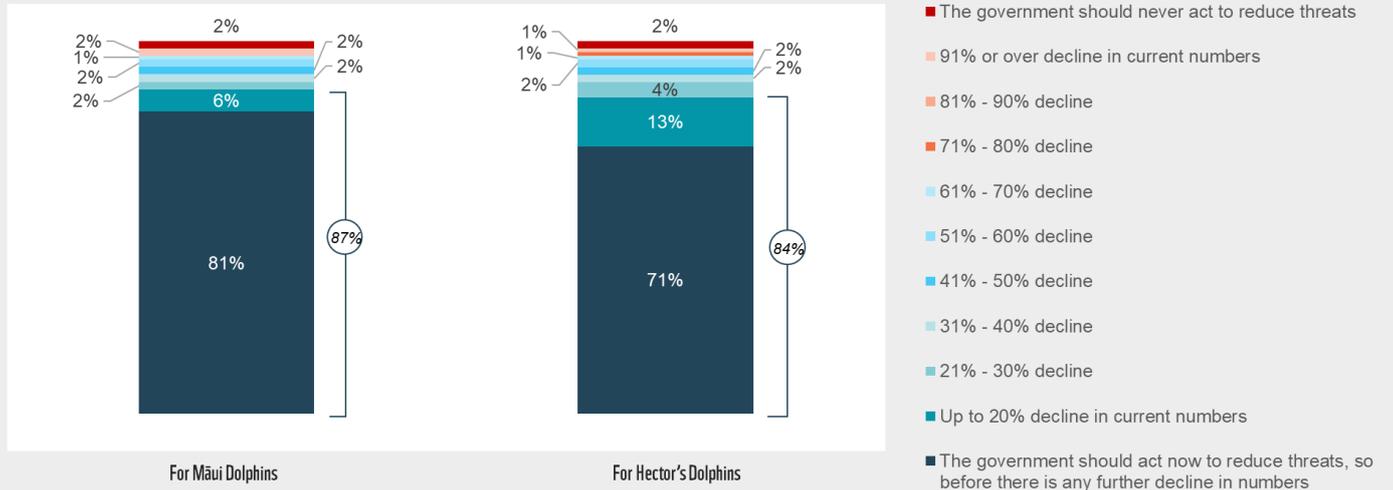


Base: New Zealanders aged 18 years or over (n=1,000). Excludes don't knows. Full question wording in appendix.

7.0 Appendix

7.1 Full quantitative Q2 breakdown

Q2: The government is considering how much human impact is “too much”, and at what point they should act to reduce threats facing Māui and Hector’s dolphins, if at all. At what percentage decline in numbers, if at all, do you think the government should act to reduce the threats facing Māui and Hector’s dolphins?



Base: New Zealanders aged 18 years or over (n=1,000). Excludes don't knows. Full question wording in appendix.

7.2 Full quantitative questions

WWF: Kiwi attitudes towards endangered species omnibus – 109401685

Question 1 – Hector and Māui dolphin conservation action

Māui and Hector dolphins live in New Zealand’s coastal waters and look very different to other dolphins. They are the smallest dolphin in the world, have a rounded dorsal fin, and have unique grey, white and black colouring. New Zealand is the only place in the world where these dolphins are found. Māui dolphins are found along part of the North Island’s west coast while Hector’s dolphins are found around the South Island. At present there are just 63 Māui dolphins over one year of age and almost 15,000 Hector dolphins left in the world. Both Māui and Hector’s are endangered, and Māui dolphins are threatened with extinction. How much do you agree, or disagree, that each of the following are good reasons to save Māui and Hector dolphins…?

DP: RANDOMISE ORDER OF SHOWING STATEMENTS

		1. Strongly disagree	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10. Strongly agree	Don't know
A	Some of New Zealand’s native species, such as Māui and Hector’s dolphins, are unique and special – not found anywhere else in the world	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
B	New Zealand’s native species, such as Māui and Hector’s dolphins, have as much right to live as humans do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
C	New Zealanders have responsibility to look after and protect New Zealand’s native species	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
D	It would be shameful if we let our native New Zealand species, such as Māui and Hector’s dolphins, decline and disappear forever	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
E	Native New Zealand species are important to our way of life and they are part of who we are as New Zealanders	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
F	Protecting and regenerating native species is important for our country’s economy and international image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97
G	If we were to lose one of our native species it would damage New Zealand’s reputation and economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	97

Question 2 – Government action

As we mentioned in the previous question Māui and Hector dolphins live only in New Zealand’s coastal waters and at present there are just 63 Māui dolphins over one year of age and almost 15,000 Hector dolphins left in the world. Both populations have declined significantly over the last 30 years.

There are different ways the government could act to help preserve the numbers of Māui and Hector dolphins based on the threats identified by scientific research. The top known threats for these dolphins include:

- Disease (caused by human activities and land-based pollution)
- Fishing, particularly set nets
- Oil and gas exploration and mining (including under-water noise)
- Climate change.

The government is considering how much human impact is “too much”, and at what point they should act to reduce threats facing Māui and Hector dolphins, if at all.

At what percentage decline in numbers, if at all, do you think the government should act to reduce the threats facing Māui and Hector dolphins?

DP ROTATE ORDER OF COLS SHOWN.

	For Māui dolphins	For Hector dolphins
The government should act now to reduce threats, so before there is any further decline in numbers	1	1
Up to 20% decline in current numbers	2	2
21% - 30% decline	3	3
31% - 40% decline	4	4
41% - 50% decline	5	5
51% - 60% decline	6	6
61% - 70% decline	7	7
71% - 80% decline	8	8
81% - 90% decline	9	9
91% or over decline in current numbers	10	10
The government should never act to reduce threats	11	11
Don't know	12	12